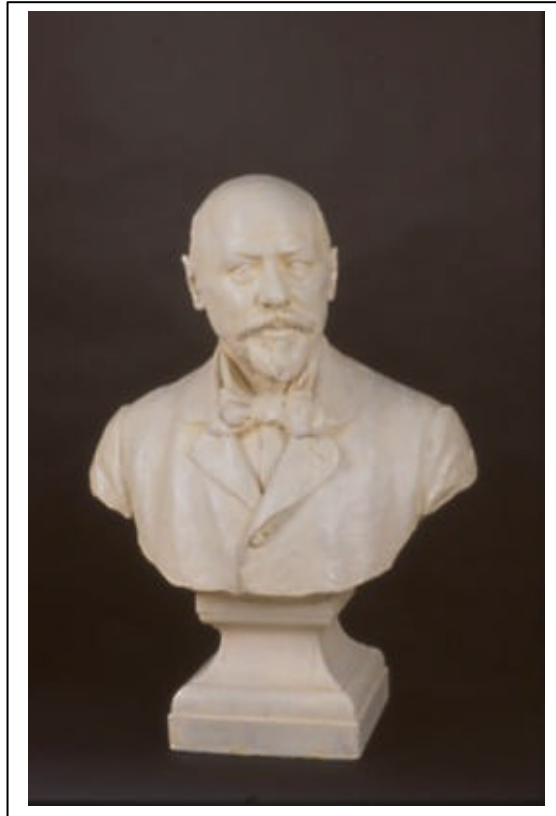


Moriz Kaposi 1837-1902: a historical reappraisal

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Moriz Kaposi 1837-1902

Fig.1: Picture of a life-size bust presented to the Japanese Dermatological Association at their Centennial Meeting in Tokyo, Japan, in April 2001 (1)

*) Archivist of the Austrian Society of Dermatology and Venerology

***) From an area which belonged to the Dual Monarchy (Regnum Hungariae) at the time of Kaposi (affiliations of authors at the end of the text)

I. A Short Biography

Much has been written over the last century about Kaposi; by his contemporaries (2,3) and ever since (4). Similarly, the dermatological entities we associate with his name have been much commented upon e.g. lupus erythematosus, the Kaposi sarcoma, Xeroderma pigmentosum, and several others. It may seem superfluous to reiterate any such details. On the other hand, recent calls for meetings read, e.g. "*The poetics of biography in science, technology and medicine*" (MERSENNE@JISCMAIL.AC.UK), stating that "*biography has returned, after decades on the margins, to the limelight of studies...*" Kaposi's biography most certainly reflects the interaction between author and subject, the mutual influence of personality and vocation, individuality and culture. Biographical details may well be justified again.

It may be recalled that Ferdinand Hebra (1816-1880) was the undisputed head of the scene in dermatology in the German speaking countries at the time. On the one hand this was the consequence of his undisputed qualities as a clinician, head of a university department, author of a famous textbook and of a monumental atlas as well as an internationally acclaimed teacher („father of German dermatology“ is his epithet), - on the other hand due to the fact that earlier attempts in Germany proper were stalled because several of the masters met an untimely death, e.g. Ludwig August Struve (working in Dorpat, Estonia), Gustav Simon, Felix von Baerensprung, Oscar Simon. Hebra performed in Vienna for almost exactly forty years. Moriz Kaposi became his adopted son in the discipline whom he valued professionally over his own son Hans, who also was a dermatologist.

Kaposi was born Moriz Kohn on 23 October 1837 (24 Tishri 5598) into a Jewish family living in Kaposvár, Southern Hungary, son of Salomon Kohn and Rosa, née Krauss. He attended a Hungarian elementary school and received the first four years of secondary schooling in a Gymnasium in his native city. Then he moved to Pozsony (Pressburg, Bratislava) to complete the remaining four years of education in the German Gymnasium in that City. Thereafter, Kohn went to Vienna where he enrolled in the Medical School of Vienna University in 1856 and from which he graduated as a doctor of medicine on 13 December, 1861, as doctor of surgery on 14 April, 1862, and as master of obstetrics on 12 July, 1866. He first worked in several departments of the Vienna General (University) Hospital, became "dozent" out of the IInd chair (syphilology) Prof. Carl Ludwig Sigmund's and eventually joined Hebra's department (Ist chair). In February 1869 he married Hebra's daughter Martha and thereby became a son-in-law of his master. Sometime before his marriage, Kohn must have changed his denomination from Judaism to Roman Catholicism because in the marriage certificate of February 6, 1869, he is listed as a Catholic.

Kaposi, not unlike Hebra, had exceptional qualities as a teacher, clinical researcher and author on the international level. He lifted the school of his father-in-law into its early apogee and made it the leading school on the continent in the last quarter of the 19th century.

In 1869, we find the first paper on lupus erythematosus still under the name of Kohn. In 1872, now as Kaposi, he published a much more detailed treatise on lupus erythematosus. In the same year, his first observations on "idiopathic multiple pigmented sarcoma of the skin" (today eponymously Kaposi's sarcoma) appeared in print. Papers on erythema multiforme,, rhinoscleroma, the mycoses, and other subjects were to follow as well as ("Kaposi's varicelliform eruption", as it is called, i.e. the superinfection of eczematous areas with herpes virus. This was not the subject of a separate publication but is mentioned in his textbook from the third edition onwards. The textbook of Hebra's first appeared in co-authored editions

(Hebra-Kaposi) and finally just under the name of Kaposi. In 1875, he was appointed Professor of Dermatology.

In 1871, Kaposi formally and officially changed his name from Kohn to Kaposi, a fact he made public in footnotes both in medical journals and in the Hebra-Kaposi textbook of dermatology. Permission for the change of name was granted by dccree on November 8, 1871.

Ferdinand von Hebra died on August 5, 1880 and Kaposi took over the department of his father-in-law. He competed successfully with other famous pupils of Hebra, namely, Hans von Hebra, his brother-in-law; Heinrich Auspitz; and Filipp Josef Pick, who was later to become head of the Department of dermatology in Prague and co-founder of the German Society of Dermatology (1889).

Karposi hosted the Second International Congress of Dermatology in Vienna in 1892 and served as its president. In Paris in 1889, at the first such meeting, he was one of the vice-presidents and in London in 1896 he was one of the foreign secretaries. Again in Paris in 1900 he served as one of the honorary presidents (together with Jonathan Hutchison). A *special festschrift* was edited on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his appointment as Professor of Dermatology, *The festschrift* appeared as a special supplementary volume (Ergänzungsband) of the *Archiv für Dermatologie und Syphilis*.

Successively, many honors were bestowed upon Kaposi. He became a member of the imperial Order of (Emperor) Leopold; he was appointed "Hofrath", officer of the Légion d'Honneur elected member of many other national and international scientific bodies.

Kaposi was a polyglot, being fluent in Hungarian, German, French, and English. At international congresses he was sought as a speaker, but he was also a sharp critic, feared for his caustic remarks. He was well integrated into the Viennese society of the time and was a friend of many artists, e.g., the famous painter Makart who also was his patient and who did a portrait of his wife, and the sculptor Kundmann who created the statue crowning the Kaposi tomb, for which Kaposi's wife Martha served as model.

Kaposi and Martha Hebra had five children, three sons and two daughters. There is no name-carrying descendant in the direct line.

Let us listen to a contemporary and how he saw Kaposi and his personality:

William Dubreuilh (1857-1935), first professor and chairman of dermatology in Bordeaux, in his *Souvenirs dermatologiques* at the Budapest World Congress in 1935, Budapest 1936, vol. IV, pp. 53-57, writes the following: "*J'ai fait en 1886 mon premier voyage à Vienne qui était un peu la capitale de la dermatologie...j'y ai trouvé Neumann et Kaposi et ce dernier me fit beaucoup d'impression. Il me reçut avec la plus grand bienveillance, grace à une lettre d'introduction d'Alfred Fournier, et à ma première visite, entrant dans l'amphithéâtre où j'avais pris place, il commença sa leçon en français; après le premières phrases je lui dis que je comprenais l'allemand et la leçon continua de façon normale. C'était une coquetterie de polyglotte et je le vis bien six ans plus tard quand au Congrès de Vienne il souhaita la bienvenue aux membres du congrès à chacun dans sa langue.*

But, *hélas*, great personalities also meet malicious critique. Dubrueil concludes on Kaposi: "*On disait de Kaposi qu'il avait pris la fille de Hebra, sa maison, sa chaire et sa clientèle, laissant le reste à son beau-frère Hans Hebra.*"

Voilà, these words speak for themselves.

II. The Family

The author had cordial relations with some of the members of the grandson/granddaughter generation, especially Mrs. Hildegard Kaposi. They all have died meanwhile. Further generations, both in Austria and descendants of his brother in Budapest, were not very interested in continued personal contact (understandably because of the long time elapsed)(4) Criticism in regard of how much Kaposi felt "Jewish" was uttered some time ago (5). We have argued against this critique recently because we feel sure that he did not dishonor to his ancestral traditions(6). Changing the name is a personal matter and not a moral cause.

Kaposi's rationalization for his change of name was as follows: "Kohn" is a name carried by hundreds of people of various classes and of different professions; mistakes are constantly and increasingly made about persons carrying the same name. At Vienna university alone there were five doctors with a similar surname; one even with the same given name Moriz, and one other, Moriz Gohn. Still another, Emanuel Kohn worked in the same department where he had started (Prof. Sigmund's). He was concerned about the possibility that his scientific work would mistakenly be credited to colleagues bearing the same surname. He explicitly stated that it was for these reasons alone that he wished to change his name.



Fig.2. depicts Kaposi's application to change the family name and take „Kohn“ for „Kaposi“: „Der ergebenst gefertigte stellt das unterthänige Ansuchen, dass ihm für sich und seine Familie gestattet werde, seinem bisherigen Familiennamen „Kohn“ gegen „Kaposi“ vertauschen zu dürfen...“ (1870).(undated but evident from the stamps)

Old Austria-Hungary was THE catholic state. Kaposi was ambitious, he was gifted, he was determined. There were very many Jews, and Cohanim at that, around in dermatology in Vienna at the time. Kaposi wanted to have a singular name and – this is documented in his personal application for change of name, - moreover he wanted to relate to his beloved native place of *Kaposvár*, Hungary, therefore he chose KAPOSI instead of KOHEN.

The fact that there were many Jewish doctors around with the same or a similar name has already been alluded to. The following illustration (Fig.3) exemplifies the situation in the very department of Prof. C L Sigmund (syphilology) where two doctors by this name were competing with each other. *Dr. Emanuel Kohn*, and *Dr. Moriz Kohn*, both apply for becoming *dozent* at the same time and their professor had to review their c.v. and to forward this application to the college of professors. The document may serve as a visible proof of the density of *Cohanim* in medicine in the Vienna faculty at the time. At the time we should recall, first names were never spelled out, frequently even initials were not given in publications. We should not be too critical with such a stance which speaks for his great professional ambition.

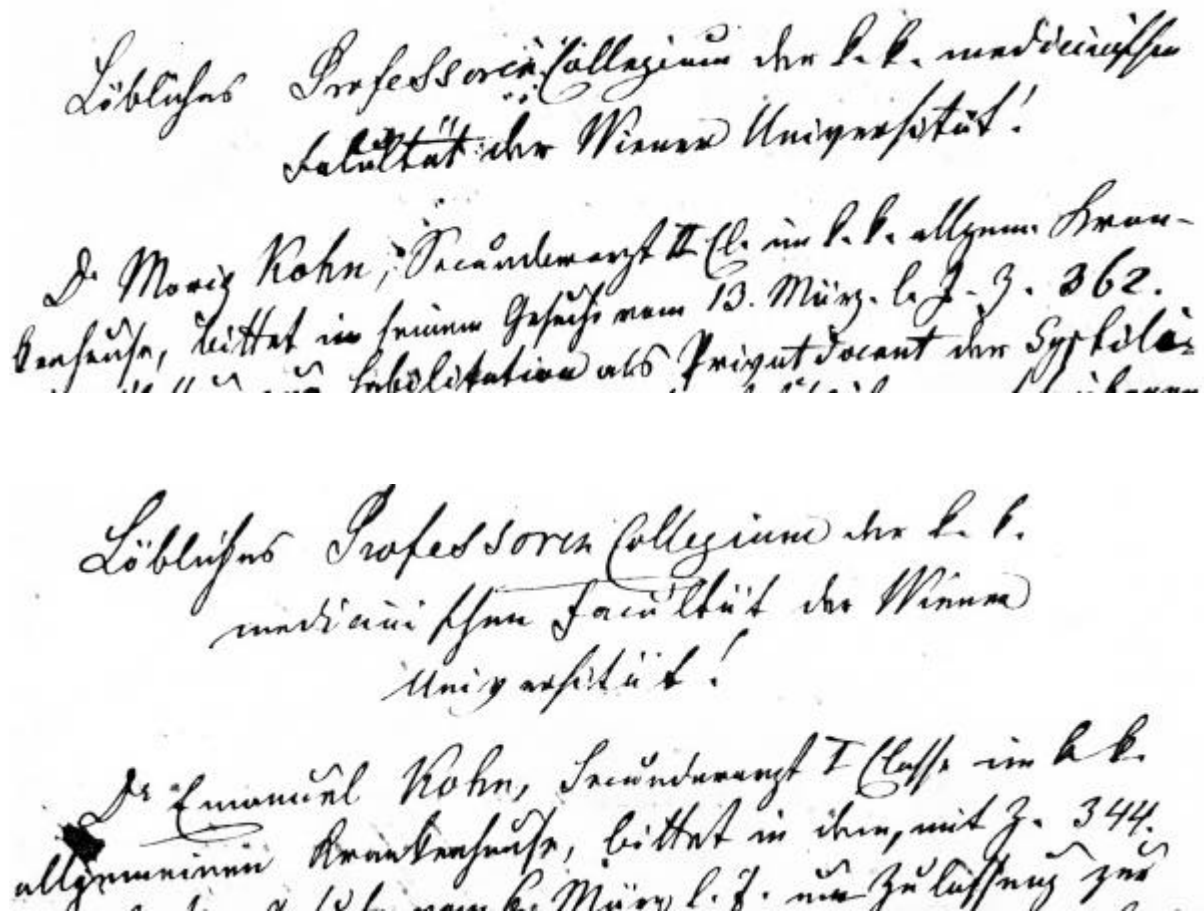


Fig 3. Referee's (Professor C L Sigmund von Ilanors) expertise addressed to the college of professors. „Löbliches Professoren Collegium der k.k.medizinischen Fakultät der Wiener Universität...“ dated 26th and 24th March 1866. Relating to the two candidates for „dozentur“ *Dr. Moriz Kohn, Secundararzt II. Classe im k.k. allgemeinen Krankenhause...und Dr. Emanuel Kohn, Secundararzt I. Classe im k.k. allgemeinen Krankenhause...*

III. The Dermatological Heritage and Kaposi's Bibliography

Only a few main points shall be made because too much has already been written and commented about his papers and no renewed attempt is made here. Attention is drawn only to the original reports. Current encyclopedic texts such as Fitzpatrick's *Dermatology in General Medicine* offer ample information of how these entities of yesteryear are to be understood today.

Unforgettable dermatologic achievements, so to say, are:

Systemic lupus erythematosus 1869/1872 (see the poster at the end of this paper)

Kaposi sarcoma 1872

Xeroderma pigmentosum 1882

Kaposi's varicelliform eruption (textbook; 3rd and later editions.)

Kaposi-Besnier-Doyon ed. of his textbook of dermatology. 2nd French ed. 1891, 2 vols

IInd International Congress of Dermatology in Vienna 1892

Kaposi was a very proud and self confident man. As evident from the above bibliography, he used to add '*mih*' to newly described entities, e.g. Xeroderma pigmentosum so as to make absolutely certain that HE was the original author and not somebody else. If we look at the entity of lupus erythematosus which may serve as a master example on account of its long and tortuous history Kaposi's foresight and clinical acumen was really remarkable. *Systemic* lupus erythematosus was re-discovered only many decades later in America. And the last page in the paper on his sarcoma, (interestingly published in the same year as the extensive lupus erythematosus study (1872)), prophetically reads " *muss für dieses Uebel eine bereits von Anfang her vorhandene allgemeine Erkrankung (Dyskrasie) angenommen werden*". Yes, by today we know it, *immunosuppression* is the conditioning factor!

What the 2nd French edition of his textbook (1891) is concerned, it was called the most important text in the late 19th century. Why? Ernest Besnier and André Doyon, the French translators and editors, added about 50% of text, presenting the view of the French school at the individual questions in the field (as opposed to the Vienna school). This was the first syncretic text in dermatology, or, to put it differently, it is what *Fitzpatrick's* is for us today.

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(Taken from the original publications in 1902 and slightly modified as to the spelling from Stefan Weidenfeld (2) and Eduard Spiegler (3) and completed as far as possible. The list is intended to give an impression of the topics rather than the page and column numbers in all places. Various reports are not indexed in the journals or periodicals and appear under society headings. Some could not be verified.

IV. A Centennial Retrospect.

With Kaposi's demise a hundred years ago, the great epoch of Vienna dermatology came to an end. The crimes of the decades of the first half of the 20th century require a sober atonement by us, the fellow Austrians. The Jewish core of Austrian dermatology was annihilated during this period(7) and it took the better part of the saeculum to begin anew and to build a school in the discipline. Suffice it to say that this was possible only by internationalization of the discipline, by going to America where many of the talents had fled. Reconsidering the time of peak fame at the beginning of the 21st century, illustrates how political changes exert their profound influence on the development of science, of medicine in general.

Together with the Kaposi sarcoma, the description of lupus erythematosus may be seen as Kaposi's main merit, therefore a perspective on the iconographic presentation of lupus erythematosus in dermatologic periodicals, books and atlases, is added:

The poster (overleaf) on the development of the clinical entity of cutaneous lupus erythematosus during the 19th century, was displayed at the Centennial of the Japanese Dermatological Association in Tokyo, April 2001 and thereafter, at the Meeting of the British Association of Dermatologists in Cardiff, in July 2001 where a call for historical posters was made. Kaposi popularized the latinized version *lupus erythematosus* in international dermatology, in place of the original French term *Lupus érythémateux* of Cazenave. Furthermore he wrote *the first extensive treatise* on this entity and *he first described systemic manifestations*. In the original early papers where the condition was called *érythème centrifuge* or *seborrhoea congestiva*, only *cutaneous* manifestations were described, in part also depicted. It took the better part of the 19th century, from the time of Alibert's pupil Laurent-Théodore (Gaudenz) Bielt (1781-1840) to the epoch of Keizo Dohi (1866-1931). For a perspective on this fascinating story see (8).

The *iconographic development is re-enacted in the following pages*, including a masterly moulage of Jules Baretta (1834-1923). It is worth being mentioned, that three of the most famous painters worked for Hebra and Kaposi from the sixties of the 19th century well into the 20th century (Drs. Anton Elfinger and Carl and Julius Heitzmann).

The memory of the master is lively in our minds .

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Legends

Fig.1 Fig.1: Picture of a life-size bust presented to the Japanese Dermatological Association at their Centennial Meeting in Tokyo, Japan, in April 2001 (1)
(Bild einer lebensgrossen Büste, die der Japanischen Dermatologischen Gesellschaft anlässlich ihrer 100-Jahr-Feier im Aril 2001 geschenkt wurde)

Fig.2. depicts Kaposi's application to change the family name and take „Kohn“ for „Kaposi“:(Kaposi's Antrag auf Änderung des Familiennamens von „Kohn“ auf „Kaposi“). „The undersigned humbly request to be permitted to change his family name „Kohn“ to „Kaposi“, for himself and his family“.
(„Der ergebenst gefertigte stellt das unterthänige Ansuchen, dass ihm für sich und seine Familie gestattet werde, seinem bisherigen Familiennamen „Kohn“ gegen „Kaposi“ vertauschen zu dürfen...“) (1870).(undated but eviden from the stamps) (undatiert, jedoch evident aus den Stempelmarken)“:

Fig 3. Referee's (Professor C L Sigmund von Ilanors) expertise addressed to the college of professors.(Das Referat Prof. Sigmund's gerichtet an das Professoren-Kollegium):“Esteemed Professors of the College of the medical faculty of the University of Vienna“ („Löbliches Professoren Collegium der k.k.medizinischen Fakultät der Wiener Universität...“) dated 26th and 24th March 1866. Relating to the two candidtates for „dozentur“*Dr. Moriz Kohn, Secundararzt II. Classe im k.k. allgemeinen Krankenhause...und Dr. Emanuel Kohn, Secundararzt I. Classe im k.k. allgemeinen Krankenhause*
It is evident that at the same time and out of the same department (Sigmund's) two canidates by the name of Kohn were competing for becoming „dozent“.(*Es is augenscheinlich, dass zwei Kandidaten mit den Namen Kohn aus derselben Klinik zur Habilitation einreichten*)